

# THE JESSE JAMES STORIES

## A WEEKLY DEALING WITH THE DETECTION OF CRIME

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at New York Post Office by STREET & SMITH, 238 William St., N. Y.

No. 50.

Price, Five Cents.

### JESSE JAMES' DOUBLE DUEL

OR  
THE PRICE OF A LIFE



"JESSE JAMES, I STAKE MY HONOR; YES, MY LIFE, IF NEED BE, FOR THE RANSOM YOU DEMAND TO SATISFY YOUR REVENGE AGAINST MY FATHER! WILL YOU ACCEPT THE TERMS?" CRIED THE BEAUTIFUL GIRL.



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# JESSE JAMES' DOUBLE DUEL;

OR,

## The Price of a Life.

By W. B. LAWSON.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE FLYING LEAP.

Who he was no one knew; but he had come into the mining camp one pleasant Sunday afternoon like a whirlwind, and afterward had told the landlord of the "Hash House" that his name was James, and that he hailed from Missouri.

His coming into the camp was unexpected, but very welcome to the miners.

He had been descried some distance off, coming along a mountain ridge that was in plain view of the hundred or more cabins in the valley, and when first seen was fairly flying along at a terrific pace, unmindful that a trip of his horse would send him into eternity.

He evidently did not know what lay before him; or he was a madman and did not care.

Every eye, and there were several hundred miners in the valley that balmy afternoon, was upon him.

"Who is he?"

That was the question of all, but no one answered.

He dashed along at the same mad rate, while yells of warning came from all sides:

"Beware of the cañon!"

"There's death before you!"

"Told up, hard, or you are dead!"

But the horseman heeded not the cry, and, in another instant, was in full view of a deep chasm before him.

It was a split in the mountain, and every inch of fifteen feet wide—down two hundred feet to death for one who fell into it.

But he reined his horse in upon the very edge, and gazed at the death-trap an instant, while a yell went



up from the mining camps below at his unexpected escape.

But only for an instant did the horse remain pulled back on its haunches. The horseman wheeled, rode back a short distance, and once more dashed forward toward the mountain rift.

A silence like death reigned in the camps below at this desperate act, and all eyes were upon the daring horseman.

They saw him crouch low in his saddle, his rein grasped well in hand, and then sink the spurs deep into the flanks of his splendid blood-red bay.

One second of suspense and the noble brute rose to the mighty leap, and seemed suspended in the air above the chasm.

Then he came down upon the further side, dropped to his knees, recovered himself and sped on, while the yells of the admiring miners made the mountains echo and re-echo again.

Down the steep, winding trail, he came, and dashed into the camp at the same terrific rate.

"Men, I am here to warn you of danger, for the renegade chief, Wolf, and his outlaws are riding toward your camps to raid you.

"Arm quickly and go to the pass in the mountains and ambush them.

"It is just three miles from here, and you have one hour to get there!"

All was at once excitement, for the Wolf, renegade white man and leader of outlaws and Indians, was a terror in the land.

But a voice called out:

"Who is you, pard, and where from?"

"It matters not now who I am, or where from. Find that out afterward."

"Maybe you is Wolf's spy, and when we leave camp one way he'll come in t'other way."

A silence followed the words, for the speaker was a man but too well known in camp.

He was Dick Demond, a desperado, a bully, who answered to the nickname of Deadly Hand, for when he drew gun on a man sudden death followed.

All eyes were upon the stranger, and he said quietly:

"My friends, I surrender myself to your keeping, to see if I have not told you the truth, and you can hold me as gallows fruit until you find out.

"Then, when you set me free, as you will do, I shall make that man eat his words," and he glanced toward Deadly hand.

"You will, will you? Well——"

"Hold! wait until you have proven my words false—then I am at your service."

"That's so! Come, lads, to the pass! to the pass!" and the cry rang out upon all sides.

"I should like to go with you, sir, to lend a hand, if I am not to be held as a hostage to prove my words," said the stranger, addressing Landlord Sampson, who replied:

"And go you shall, pard, for I am your friend.

"Come, lads; who leads?"

"I does! I'll be cap'n!" cried Deadly Hand.

"Permit me to offer my services, if you care to trust me," and the stranger rode forward.

A cheer greeted his words, and Deadly Hand muttered:

"You kin lead, but I'll be nigh yer, if yer plays false, and yer'll find me when yer gits back ter camp, too, my game cock."

The stranger now rode forward with Landlord Sampson, whose horse had been brought to him by one of the servants of the hotel, and soon after three hundred well-mounted, well-armed men set out for the pass in the mountains, three miles distant.

It was the very place to lie in ambush, and scouts sent ahead at a run were there to report, as the force rode up, that a large band of horsemen were winding around the trail on the mountain-side.

The stranger placed his men in position, with their horses back behind a ridge, and soon after the outlaws came in sight.

It was just sunset, and it was evidently the intention of the chief to camp at the pass for several



hours, and then dash down upon the camps by the valley trails.

The order was given to camp on the trail, and just then came the ringing command:

"Fire!"

Rifles and revolvers rang out from among the undergrowth, and from behind rocks and trees. Robbers and mustangs bit the dust.

To surprise had been Wolf's intention, and when surprised, he could but retreat, for the volley told him that he had a large force to deal with, and perhaps he had been flanked.

So, in wild confusion, the renegades turned and fled, carrying off their wounded and a few dead, and, mounting, the miners gave hot chase.

But night soon fell upon the scene, and the larger force of miners returned to Last Chance, as the mining camps had been named by the first miners who had visited the valley.

The stranger had gone with Landlord Sampson to the Hash House, and been given the best room in that establishment, and as he entered the social hall later on that night he was greeted with three rousing cheers, followed by the words:

"Is you lookin' fer me, pard, fer I is jist starvin' to eat them words o' mine you was goin' ter feed me on?"

The speaker was Deadly Hand, and he held a revolver covering the heart of the stranger.

## CHAPTER II.

### LAST CHANCE.

Last Chance was a mining camp of the toughest kind.

It had not "panned out" in sufficient quantities to set people wild, but the miners that worked got a handsome sum for their labor, and business was always brisk.

There were other camps down the valley, but Last Chance was the center of attraction, and was noted for its half-dozen good stores, blacksmith shop and "hotel," which last was kept by Landlord Sampson.

He had won the name of "Gold Grip Sampson," because all he took hold of made money for him, and he had, with a very proper appreciation of his establishment, bestowed upon it the name of Hash House.

Sampson had come West to make a fortune, and his daughter, Ella, a beautiful young girl of eighteen, had later come out to Last Chance to make it her home also.

The Hash House, under her influence, was much better than it otherwise would have been, and there was not a man in camp that did not worship Ella Sampson.

Back on the hillside from the hotel she and her father had their cabin home of four rooms, and no one dared intrude there.

Each day she was wont to receive wild flowers, specimens of gold dust and "ore," and many other little souvenirs the miners picked up in the mountains.

She knew every mine, and was wont to ride alone often through the mountains and valleys.

Her father had told her of the stranger's arrival, and hinted that Deadly Hand intended to make trouble for him, he feared.

That night Ella had looked in through the window, when the stranger went in to supper, and she saw a man, straight as a soldier, and with the bearing of one.

He had a long mustache, and his face was one to see and remember.

"How handsome! who can he be?" so murmured pretty Ella Sampson, as she stood gazing, as though the man had touched her heart. So far it had been fancy free, though many feared that handsome Deadly Hand would some day carry out his threat to make her his wife.

Last Chance was certainly a lawless place.

There was not a week that several men did not "die with their boots on," and gambling and drinking seemed to be really the industries of the camps.

The "Live and Let Live Saloon" was the favorite



rendezvous in the valley, and Boss Sampson was the proprietor of it also.

It was a gambling den and drinking saloon combined, and would accommodate a couple of hundred people at a time.

The bar was built of logs, and had no opening on the saloon side, so that it looked like a miniature fort, and there were exits by means of the cellar, so that if besieged the "gin-slingers," as the bartenders were called, could make a quick and safe retreat.

This was Sampson's idea, and he kept a perfect arsenal behind the bar ready for use, while he never employed an attendant who was not "full of sand," "on the shoot" and ready to "chip in" when called on.

And Gold Grip's orders to his men were explicit:

"Don't be bullied, and put every man out who makes trouble. If you think he may feel offended at being fired, kill him first."

This advice he gave, and set the example himself, so that even the desperadoes of Last Chance knew that the Live and Let Live Saloon was not the place in which to bully the landlord.

There were other "hotels" and other saloons in Last Chance, but the establishments of which Gold Grip Sampson was the "boss" had the call on popularity and style.

The Hash House was not a mean place either, for its rooms, though small, were clean, and a cot bed was in each one, with the brook outside for a wash-basin.

Every miner was expected to furnish his own blankets and towels, but the hotel furnished a cot, knives, forks and dishes, with plenty of substantial food, for there was no French cook at "Sampson's."

There were some rooms furnished for strangers, as there was a weekly stage in and out of the place that sometimes carried "tenderfeet from the East."

One of these rooms had been assigned to the stranger, and he found that it was by no means uncomfortable.

His worldly possessions he had with him in a

horse, saddle, bridle, weapons and a pair of well-filled saddle-bags.

He unpacked his things as though he had come to stay, and made his room look quite cozy, while upon the shelf under the small mirror he placed a few toilet articles, a razor and cup, comb, brush and tooth-brush, and some towels.

Having arranged his toilet with much care, he went to supper, which had been delayed for the return of the miners from their attack on the red-skins.

He ate heartily, lighted a cigar and strolled into the saloon, to be greeted by the cheers of those present and the words of Deadly Hand.

Ella Sampson had, after seeing him at the supper-table, gone into the office and looked at the register.

She saw there simply the following:

J. JAMES, MISSOURI.

It told her nothing more than that he was an American, and the writing was almost delicate enough to have been written by a feminine hand.

Then Ella had gone along the path toward her own quarters, which led her by the open windows of the Live and Let Live Saloon.

Suddenly, she halted, for the words of Deadly Hand came to her ears.

As the desperado spoke he had covered the stranger with his revolver.

But the one thus under the revolver's muzzle did not flinch as he turned and faced the desperado amid a breathless silence, speaking:

"I told you, sir, I would make you eat your words.

"I have proven that I spoke the truth, and, if you were a true man, you would retract your insult upon me."

"I'm a true man, and yet I retracts nothin'.

"You was to make me eat my words, so just do so, pard."

It was evident to all that Deadly Hand had chosen his position with a view to trouble.

His back was to a window that was open, and he



faced his man and the crowd in the saloon, so could see every movement.

He was a splendid-looking fellow, strong as a lion, quick as a panther, and handsome, though ignorant.

He dressed better than any miner in camp, oiled his hair and beard and wore a white shirt every Sunday.

He was a deadly shot, a desperate hand with the knife, and, besides, his great strength made him feared by all. There was no one in the camp who dared to cross him.

He certainly felt that no one would dare do so now, where it was a fair fight between himself and the stranger.

"I did not expect to face a coward, so you drew on me before I saw you, and I am at your mercy; but, if you will fight me a fair duel, I will meet you now with any weapons you may select."

In the hush that was upon the room, every word of the stranger was distinctly heard, and a number of voices echoed the cry of one man:

"That's fair and squar', Dick."

"This is my fight, pards, not your'n, so don't chip in on my game."

"This fine pilgrim said as how he meant to make me take back what I said, and so I tells him now to jist draw and toss me a bullet ter chaw on, as a kind o' appetizer to them words I has got ter eat."

"Draw, stranger, and sail in."

There was not a man present who did not know that if the stranger made the slightest movement toward drawing a weapon, he would fall dead that instant in his tracks, for Deadly Hand was not the man to miss his aim.

### CHAPTER III.

#### A RESCUER.

Not a muscle of the stranger's face moved, as he stood there facing the muzzle of Deadly Hand's revolver.

He showed not the slightest sign of fear.

If he knew, and he could not but know, that the

bully meant to kill him, he did not show that he feared death.

Not an appealing look did he turn toward the miners.

He was a stranger there in the midst of men whose cabins he had saved from the torch of the redskins, whose gold—the result of hard toil—he had kept them from being robbed of, and whose lives in fact he had saved, and yet no one seemed to be his friend.

If he had a friend there, that one was afraid to spring to his side and face the feared and desperate Deadly Hand.

But the stranger made no appeal; he did not flinch; he simply looked into the muzzle of the revolver as though deciding just what he would do.

A handsome pair of pearl-handled revolvers, silver mounted, were in his belt, along with a long, ugly-looking knife.

His lips were closed over a cigar, and blue curls of smoke went upward, showing that he smoked leisurely, in spite of his danger.

"He's cool as ice," said one, in a whisper.

"Yes, he's grit to the bone."

"Got sand to throw to ther winds."

"Looks as tho' he were takin' Dick's pictur'."

"He's dead, sartin, ef he winks."

"We oughter call a halt, pards."

"We'd git hot lead if we did."

Such were the whispered words that went around, yet were hardly heard.

"Does yer throw yer hands up, stranger, and back down, for I hain't standin' here to be photographed?"

"Up with your hands, Dick Demond, or I'll kill you!" and, with these ringing words, Ella Sampson leaped through the window, her revolver leveled at the desperado, and her face pale and determined.

All in Last Chance knew that Ella Sampson could hit "dead center," every time.

She was noted, too, for her reckless riding, as well as her use of revolver and rifle, for she was wont often to supply the Hash House table with game.



She had once leveled a revolver at a miner who was impudent to her and made him beg her pardon, so it was known that she was not one to trifle with.

Dick Demond loved her desperately, and he had vowed to himself if she did not marry him, she should never become the wife of any other man.

Ella rather liked the bold fellow, but she did not love him, and yet her manner led him to believe that she did.

Now, to see her suddenly spring in through the window and cover him with a revolver, almost wholly unnerved him.

Seeing her do what not one in the crowd dared do, the miners broke forth in a yell, which added to Deadly Hand's confusion.

"Up with your hands, I say; I will stand no nonsense!" repeated the girl.

"What does yer want, Ella?"

"Just what I say."

"You has no right to chip in here."

"I have a right, when you take a man at a disadvantage, and have not the manhood in you to acknowledge you were wrong, after his warning saved us all, as it did."

"He was going to make me eat my words, he said."

"He gave you the chance to beg his pardon."

"I beg no man's pardon."

"Then that shows the brute in your nature! Up with your hands, I say!"

"I won't."

"So help me, God, I'll kill you, Dick Demond, if you do not obey."

All knew that she meant just what she said.

"Permit me to arrange this affair," and James stepped forward.

"That man must first obey me; then you can have your say, sir," and Ella stepped nearer the desperado, while the stranger bowed politely and stood still, yet did not take advantage of the situation to draw a weapon.

"The girl will kill you, Dick, so you had better

obey, as you would if a man commanded you to," warned Landlord Sampson, now coming forward, for one of his men had gone to call him.

"I will kill you, Dick, if you do not obey! Up with your hands, I say!" and Ella's revolver covered the head of the desperado, while a breathless silence reigned in the saloon.

"Well, I does it, but that pilgrim will find I hain't done with him yet."

A perfect yell greeted these words of the desperado.

He had yielded, and to a girl—for his hands went quickly above his head.

Then Ella said:

"Dick Demond, you may find that the stranger is not done with you, but there is to be no trouble now, in my presence, or I will chip in again.

"Now, sir, what were you going to say?" and, lowering her weapon, she turned toward the stranger.

He bowed in a courtly way, and said:

"Permit me, young lady, to thank you for helping me out of an ugly scrape and to congratulate you upon your nerve.

"I did not wish to begin my life in Last Chance by getting into trouble, but that bully has forced it upon me.

"I was coming here to seek a home, when I, from a hiding-place, heard the plot of the redskins to surprise Last Chance, so I rode hither with all speed to warn you.

"Now, let me arrange with this man," and the stranger turned to Dick Demond.

His words had been heard by all, and were well received. It was evident that he had made a good impression, and whether he could hold it depended entirely upon how he dealt with the desperado miner.

Not a soul present had blamed him for not attempting to draw a weapon when under the muzzle of Deadly Hand's revolver, and certainly he had met the danger with marked coolness and fearlessness.

His plan of meeting the redskins had proved suc-



cessful, and his taking a leap on horseback which no man in Last Chance had looked upon as possible, had shown that he possessed marvelous nerve.

He was a handsome fellow, looked the gentleman, was courtly in his manners and possessed a softness of demeanor that was womanly in its way, and yet there was known to be a heart of iron beneath the velvet exterior.

Now every eye was upon him, while Deadly Hand faced him with a look of intensest hatred on every feature.

He had sought to bully the stranger from the start, and thus add new laurels to his name as a desperate character, and that he had been humiliated through him by Ella had made him almost demon-like in his fury.

The fact that Ella Sampson had saved the stranger from his deathshot infuriated him, and he intended that it should be a fight to the bitter end between them; either that, or the stranger would have to fly ignominiously out of the camps.

He must redeem his character of having been outbraved by a woman, and so he turned to hear what his foe had to say.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE STRANGER.

Without any show of anger, excitement, or a desire to curry favor, the stranger turned to Deadly Hand.

His words were not spoken in the loud tone of the bravado, but softly, and yet all heard them, his utterance was so distinct.

"Your name is Dick Demond, I believe, for so I think this lady called you?"

"Yas, and it are Deadly Hand, too, and I guess the boys christined me because they know'd what I c'u'd do."

"Doubtless they did, Mr. Dick Demond, of the Deadly Hand, for bordermen generally know what they are about," was the cool rejoinder.

"What might be your name, pilgrim?"

"My name is James, and I am from Missouri."

"Got too hot for you thar?"

"Yes, I like this climate better; but let us not waste words, but come to business."

"I are your man, be it revolver, rifle or knife!"

"Do you gamble, Mister Deadly Hand?"

"I does, and I plays as I shoots—to win."

"Ah! I am glad to hear it, for I am a gambler."

"Now, be yer? Wall, I are the trump keerd o' this pack, hain't I, pards?"

A general assent was given to this, which, being interpreted, was to the effect that Deadly Hand was the "boss player" in Last Chance.

To this many present could testify from sad experience.

In truth, there were many who believed that the bully played a false game, so regular were his winnings.

"I have a game to propose with you, then," resumed the stranger.

"We can make it to suit the game of cards, for I propose to play you for your life or mine."

"Ther devil!"

Deadly Hand uttered the exclamation with great vehemence, while all now grew silent with the intense interest of the situation.

"I will tell you what we will do.

"Here is my revolver. It is loaded. I'll put it on this table, and along with it one thousand dollars to add interest to the game; then we play one game to win, or best two in three, or best three in five, just as you please, and the winner takes the stakes."

"The revolver and the money?"

"Yes; and the principal stake."

"And what are that?" asked Deadly Hand, with growing interest.

"The life of the loser!" was the cool response of the man from Missouri.

"Does yer mean that ther loser o' ther game loses his life?"

"That is it exactly."

"Who shoots him?"



"The winner, of course."

"Durnation!"

It was evident from the exclamation of Deadly Hand that he did not like the arrangement.

"Why can't we draw and hev it out?"

"Because you may be a bad shot and injure others, and, besides, anybody can enjoy a draw and fair fight; but you pride yourself upon your nerve and your card playing, and I tell you I am a gambler.

"Then, too, our friends here would be better entertained by a game of life and death. Do you play, or do you back down after all your bluster, and thus eat your words?"

There was something so polite and calm in the manner of the stranger, so free from bravado, that he won the admiration of all, and one voice called out:

"It's a square deal, Dick!"

Then others said:

"Play him ther game, Deadly Hand!"

"Yes—the game let it be."

"Yer can't back down now, Dick."

"Yer has some trick in this or yer wouldn't be so cool in proposin' it," said the desperado, not half liking it, yet convinced that he had to face the ordeal or lose his grip in Last Chance. To back down from the game, especially before Ella Sampson, was not to be thought of for an instant.

But he wished to gain time, hoping some one would come to his rescue, so he accused the stranger of wanting to play a trick.

"There is no trick, and, if I catch you playing any, or cheating, I will kill you on the spot, as you may me if you catch me cheating," was the reply.

"Squar' agin!" called out a voice, and the words were greeted with a cheer.

"I are ready to meet you, pard, I don't keer when or how, but this looks like a one-sided game."

"It is, for the winner does the killing; but I leave it to this lady if it is not as fair for one as the other?"

"Just as fair, sir," responded Ella, who was lean-

ing against the bar, an interested spectator and listener to all that was taking place.

"Waal, I has a pack o' keerds here, and I guesses my word are good for the gold."

"Your word is good for nothing with me, sir, so put up your gold, as I shall—here!"

As he spoke, he unbuckled a belt from about his waist, and took from it fifty twenty-dollar gold pieces, which he placed upon the table. He laid his pistol there, also.

The miners also noted that the thousand dollars was by no means all he had in the belt, for more gold was there, and rolls of bills, too.

They now took a better look at him as he stood full under the lamps in the saloon.

As Deadly Hand now had a good look at him, he said:

"Waal, my dandy, I'll just ruffle your fine feathers fer yer, so here goes fer ther game, and I'll see that yer fun'ral expenses is paid and yer has a good send-off frum Hallelujah Hill," the last being the name of the cemetery of Last Chance.

As the bully spoke, he seated himself at the table and threw down a pack of cards.

"One moment, sir."

"Waal?"

"You are to match my money there with a like sum, and your cards are not the ones to be used in our little game."

"Waal, I kin match your dust.

"Gold Grip, jist put down a thousand thar fer me, fer you has my dust."

"Certainly, Dick," and the landlord, who was the banker for a number of the miners, called to one of his bartenders to get the sum named.

The truth was Dick Demond wished to keep his gold in Sampson's hands, that he might know how well off he was, and not refuse his daughter to him on account of poverty.

The money was placed on the table, and Deadly Hand said:

"Now, come, fer the game."



"Not with those marked cards," was the quiet reply of the man from Missouri, and he pointed to the pack which the desperado had placed upon the table.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE GAME.

"Look a-heur, stranger, hain't yer goin' it jist a leetle too strong ter accuse me o' cheatin', fer ter play with marked cards are thet?"

"Your cards are marked, and I'll prove it by showing the marks," was the reply.

Deadly Hand turned slightly pale at this, for he saw Ella step forward to pick up the pack, and he quickly said:

"Waal, I hain't no wish ter quarrel with a man who may be said ter be livin' his last few minutes o' life, so I'll git a new pack."

"Will you kindly procure a pack for us, miss?" and the stranger turned to Ella, who called to one of the bartenders to give her a fresh pack of cards. Then she glanced earnestly over those she held in her hand, and which the stranger had said were marked.

"I see no mark on these, sir," she said.

"It is plain to me. Do you notice the lines on the back, which seem to be merely fancy work, show by examination just what card each one is."

For a full minute did Ella look, ere she discovered the puzzle, but suddenly it flashed before her eyes, and, with a look at the miner, she thrust the pack into her pocket.

"If thar is any mark on them cards, I don't know it, and you shan't hold me afore my pards as a thief, fer——"

"Hands off that revolver, sir!"

The words rang out stern and sharp now, and this time the stranger held the miner at his mercy.

"The table is ready, sir, and I am waiting to play the game.

"Here is my gold, as you see, and my revolver lies with it."

"And thar is my dust, and my weapon covers it,"

and Deadly Hand placed his revolver upon his pile of gold.

The cards were handed to the Missourian by Ella, and, glancing at them quickly, he said:

"These are all right, miss.

"Now, sir, do you understand the terms of the game?"

"The one who wins gits the dust, and takes up his revolver and shoots t'other," said Deadly Hand.

"The winner gets the gold, and the loser stands yonder against that window.

"Miss Ella gives the word, if she will be so kind, and the winner shoots the loser, and pays burial expenses."

"I are willin'," said Demond, but his voice was not so full of confidence as was usual with him.

His having to play with other cards than his own seemed to have discouraged him.

"I will not act, sir, but my father will," said Ella, and the landlord stepped forward, when the stranger said:

"I give you my belt of arms, sir, and this man must also give up his.

"Then please hold your revolver ready, and, should either cheat, or the loser attempt to take his weapon from the table, be good enough to kill him."

There was something so cool in the manner of the Missourian that he won the admiration of all.

He was a stranger, but he had money, and, more, he had grit.

He had been well mounted, thoroughly armed, and he had rendered a great service to all in the camps.

He was handsome, fearless-faced, and had a certain fascination of manner about him that was irresistible.

On the other hand, Deadly Hand was feared by all.

He had ruled the camps by the fear he caused on all sides, and here was a man he had tried to bully who would not submit to the desperado's iron rule.

So all watched the result with the deepest of in-



terest, and there was a dread silence in the saloon as the arrangements for the game were made.

The Missourian took a seat quietly, lighted a fresh cigar, and handed the pack of cards to Dick Demond to shuffle.

Ella Sampson stood by her father's side, pale but determined.

She had helped the man from Missouri out of an ugly scrape, and she intended to see the end of it.

Landlord Sampson held the belts of each man on his arm, and in his right hand was a revolver ready for use, should the loser attempt to break the compact. Those who knew the proprietor of the Hash House were well aware that he would use it if need be.

The crowd, silent and earnest, gathered around, and the game was begun under a suspense that was painful.

It was to be one game, for so it had been decided, and the lookers-on felt that one of the two men must die within a few minutes.

The hands were dealt out, and the stranger seemed not to feel that his life was depending upon the turn of a card.

Amid a silence that could be felt, the game opened, and all could not but observe that Deadly Hand was not playing with his usual reckless manner.

He was slow in his plays, and his face was pale.

The stranger looked indifferent, and that was all.

As the last card was thrown down a long breath was drawn that seemed to come from every one.

The suspense as to who was to be the victim was over.

"I have won, sir," was the quiet remark of the Missourian.

Deadly Hand made no reply. His face had turned to an ashen hue.

He cast a quick glance at the landlord, but it gave him no hope, and he saw that Gold Grip would kill him if he moved his hand toward his revolver.

As though to put the temptation out of his way, Ella stepped forward and took the weapon of the des-

perado, as the other player picked up his own revolver and the gold.

There seemed to be one ray of hope for the miner, and he clutched at it.

"If you missed me, pard?" he asked, and his voice was husky.

All awaited the answer, and Ella with the deepest interest, for she bent forward.

"If I miss you, you are at liberty to take your revolver and kill me," responded the man from Missouri.

There was no hope for Deadly Hand in the response.

The stranger now rose, and said, sternly:

"Take your stand, sir."

Then he lighted a cigar, and stepped to his position across the saloon, glancing at the lamps to see if the light was favorable for his deadly work.

Deadly Hand was not a coward, though a bully. He had a certain pride, and he determined to face death with courage, though he was full of hope that it would be life for him in the face of what appeared to be sure end for him from the bullet.

If he faced the music without a tremor, and should not die, then he would still retain his influence in Last Chance.

He smiled as he glanced at Ella, and said, with an effort at indifference:

"I has got ter go, Miss Ella, but ef he misses, then I chips in fer a shot, and you knows me."

So with a swagger he stepped to the position assigned him, in front of the window, the shutters having been closed by order of Landlord Sampson.

He turned as he reached the spot, and said:

"Landlord, ef I passes in my checks, jist give Miss Ella ther dust you have o' mine. She is ther heiress ter my claim, and I says it afore all ter witness."

"No, I'll not have it," was the firm reply of Ella, and, before more could be said, the stranger asked, sternly:

"Are you ready, sir?"



## CHAPTER VI.

## MARKED FOR LIFE.

"I are ready ter die, ef you is ready ter do ther killin', pard," was the plucky response of Deadly Hand, as he faced his foe, revolver in hand.

The Missourian glanced at him and then at Ella.

He saw that the face of the latter was pale, and he stepped toward her and whispered something which no one else heard.

At his words her face flushed, and then, stepping back to his position, he raised his revolver and fired quick as a flash.

Deadly Hand started at the shot, but did not fall.

Then he called out, in a voice full of savage revenge:

"Missed me, by Heaven! Now, it's my chip in!"

"Hold!"

The command of the Missourian caused the hum of voices to cease, and the excitement was over in an instant.

"I did not miss you, but I did not want to kill you, so I branded you with my mark, Deadly Hand, for I sent my bullet through your left ear."

The desperado raised his hand to his ear. It was bloodstained.

He had felt the sting of the bullet, and felt that it clipped him, but meant to say nothing about it, that he might return the shot.

All now saw that there was a clean-cut, round hole in the left ear of Deadly Hand.

His face paled with fury, and a cheer at the marksmanship of the stranger broke from the lips of the crowd.

Deadly Hand was livid now, and said, in a voice that quivered with passion:

"Yer has branded me, has yer?"

"Waal, one day yer'll git my brand on you, and jist book what I say, fer it goes, ev'ry time.

"Good-night, gents," and taking his belt of arms from the landlord, the desperado left the saloon.

"You have made a deadly foe, sir," said the landlord, turning to the stranger, who responded:

"I do not care, sir; but he should be thankful for his life.

"Join me in a drink, all of you, for it is my treat."

This the crowd were most happy to do, and the liquor was placed before them, and his health was drank with a shout.

Ella had slipped out of the saloon, but not until she had said to her father that the stranger had whispered to her:

"I will not kill him in your presence, but I shall mark his left ear."

This proved his marvelous skill with a revolver, and he at once became a hero among the miners.

They owed him a debt of gratitude, and he had shown himself a "man from 'way back," as one of the miners expressed it, and so they were more than willing to acknowledge him as a ruling spirit in their midst.

Having treated to drinks and cigars all around, the stranger quietly left the saloon and sought his own quarters.

As he neared the door of his room, and was leaving the yard fronting the quarters of the landlord, he heard a voice call out:

"Mr. James!"

He at once halted and doffed his sombrero as Ella Sampson glided up to him.

"I wish to tell you that you want to be on your guard against Demond, for he will strike you in the dark some time."

"I thank you, and yet I do not wish to kill him, for your sake."

"And why for my sake?"

"Is he not your accepted lover?"

A ringing laugh followed, and then Ella said:

"You think I love Dick Demond?"

"Why, I have yet to find the man I would love."

"Ah, pardon, but I spared him because I thought you loved him.

"He made you his heiress, you know."

"Oh, yes, and professes to love me; but, if my



father is now the keeper of a border tavern, we have not always been poor.

"My father was unfortunate in the East—unfortunate because his generous nature caused him to help all of his pretended friends, and he lost his fortune by their treachery.

"He came here to seek a fortune, and when I finished school I joined him in this wild land without his will."

But she bade him good-night and went to her home.

And he had gone to his room, and, with a cigar between his teeth, had thrown himself into an easy-chair, and become lost in deepest meditation.

At last he murmured to himself:

"Well, I have come under good auspices, and all has turned out better than I expected.

"I shall remain in Last Chance, for there is money to be made here.

"And who that knew me would look for me here?"

## CHAPTER VII.

### DEAD-MAN'S DEN.

From the night of the game of cards with Deadly Hand, the man from Missouri became an object of curiosity and admiration in Last Chance.

He had been discussed after leaving the saloon by one and all, and men had wondered how he would meet Dick Demond again.

The latter's pluck, when facing death, had still held for him his power, though there were many who feared him who felt glad to know that he had met one man who had proven his master.

The next day at breakfast the stranger appeared as serene as a May morn.

He had enjoyed his meal, lighted a cigar, and then took a walk about the camps.

Everywhere he was spoken to with respect, and, on several occasions bluntly complimented upon his own nerve.

He returned to the Hash House, and was met by Landlord Sampson, who greeted him pleasantly, and asked:

"Think of locating in Last Chance, sir?"

"Yes; I have come to stay."

"Going to buy a claim, sir, or prospect for gold?"

"I have come to make money, but not by the purchase of a claim or prospecting."

"I fear you will find it hard to do in these camps, Señor James."

"No; for I made a thousand last night, you remember?"

"Ah, yes—by gambling."

"Yes, I am a professional man."

"We need them here, sir; or, at least another doctor, and a lawyer or two to decide legal cases that come up."

"I belong to neither of those professions, Landlord Sampson."

"Ah! you hardly look like a preacher," and the landlord was trying all he could to place his man.

He admired his striking appearance, was enthusiastic over his pluck and deadly aim, and liked him for the service he had rendered in saving the people of Last Chance from being plundered by the Indians.

"No; I do not preach, I practice.

"I am a gambler by profession, Mr. Sampson."

"Ah!"

At last the landlord knew his guest.

He was, he admitted, a gambler by profession.

"I might have known it," he muttered to himself, and then aloud he said:

"Well, sir, we play heavily here in Last Chance, and have some good men with cards."

"Deadly Hand is about your best, I suppose?"

"Yes, he is the most dangerous man to play against, and he wins two out of every three games, and always wins when there is a large sum at stake, while, when he loses, the amount is small, and so people have thought he cheated."

"He has cheated, sir, for I recognized the cards he had as having been marked."

"Yes, my daughter and myself looked over them this morning and saw it for ourselves, but, until you showed her the clever mark on them, she would never have suspected it.

"But you think Dick knew of it?"

"Certainly, for he turned pale the very moment he saw I would not play with his cards.

"Where do you get your cards, landlord?"

"Now I come to think of it, I bought a lot from a man who was Deadly Hand's friend."

The gambler smiled in a significant way, and replied:

"That is proof of his being a cheat; but he will never use marked cards in a game with me."

"Then you expect to play him again?"



"Why not, for I have no quarrel with him, and do not see why he should have with me.

"We played for a stake and he lost, and had I done so I hardly believe he would have given me my life."

"I am very sure of it."

"He accused me of being treacherous, and I meant that he should retract, or meet me, and so why should there be more trouble between us on the old score?"

"Demond is a devil, and I warn you against him."

"Thank you; but may I ask who owns the cabin yonder on that rocky point?" and he motioned toward a jutting ridge that came out into the valley a quarter-of-a-mile away.

"I own it, sir, but no one will live there.

"I bought it of a man who was in hard luck, and sent the money for him to his mother, as he was hanged."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; and the four owners before him were hanged, strange to say, so that it is known as Dead-Man's Den."

"That is odd; but is it for sale?"

"Yes, but no one will buy it."

"I will sir, so name your price."

"My dear sir, let me tell you that, though I am not superstitious, I really think that place a house of ill-omen.

"The first owner was the man who discovered gold in this range, and named these camps Last Chance.

"He was too lazy to work, so watched where others hid their gold, laid his plans, robbed them and fled.

"He was pursued and captured, and the miners hanged him to a piece of timber which projected over the point there where you see his cabin stands.

"Then a stranger came along and took the cabin, and he was hanged for horsestealing.

"The third man was a fellow whom we all liked, but he proved to be a spy for the mounted robbers of the gold trails."

"I have little knowledge of your country up here and its people."

"Judging from what has happened, you will not be long in getting acquainted," was the laconic response, and then the stranger asked:

"And the next owner of this cabin?"

"Ah, yes; he was a gambler, and was caught cheating with marked cards, so the boys took him out one night and hanged him.

"They did not mean to kill him, but to frighten him into giving back all the money he had won by cheating."

"And he would not?"

"Either he would not or the boys did not let him down soon enough, for he died."

"And Number Five, for you said that was the number of men who had owned the cabin, I believe?"

"Yes, there were five of them, and all hanged?"

"And, more, they are all buried right by the cabin, for the men of Last Chance are superstitious about burying a hanged man in the Hallelujah Roost, as we call our graveyard on the hill."

"A fitting name for the cemetery, surely.

"But why was Number Five hanged?"

"He had been a road-agent, taking to a life of outlawry to get money to send home, he said, and one day struck it rich here in camp, so gave up his lawless life, and turned honest.

"But he was recognized by Deadly Hand, who had been robbed one day on the Overland Coach by this man, and, though I did all in my power to save the poor fellow, up he went.

"He gave me his money. He had laid by some thousands, and I wrote to his mother and sent it to her, telling her he had met with an accident that caused his death."

"Yes; such accidents are frequent," was the dry response, and then he added:

"Well, Mr. Sampson, name your price for the cabin, graves and all, for I go there to live."

"Against all I can say, sir?"

"Yes; I have no superstitious dread."

"Will you not accept it from me, sir, for you saved me heavy losses by the warning you brought us?"

"No, thank you, Mr. Sampson, I never accept a favor from any man, though I owe your daughter the debt of my life.

"I will buy the cabin, sir."

"Then call it a couple of hundred, sir."

"Here is the money," and the sum was counted, and the papers drawn up which made the man from Missouri the owner of the cabin known as Dead-Man's Den.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## RECOGNIZED.

Having made his purchase of a house, the Misourian strolled up to see it, going alone, although the landlord had offered to accompany him.

He found it a well-built cabin with two rooms of good size, each containing a door and a window, and with a spacious fireplace in one.

There was considerable furniture of a rude kind in the cabin, for each occupant had fallen heir to the belongings therein of the one who had dwelt there before him, and he saw that he could make himself really very comfortable there.

He meant to use it only as a dwelling-place, taking his meals at the Hash House, and he sought men to make certain repairs and put up a cabin for his horses.

The place stood on a spur of a mountain range, and was approached by a path from the valley, and no one could come along the trail by day who was not seen a long way off by the occupant, should he be on the watch for him.

There was a ledge leading along up the mountain range, but a dangerous path to travel to one who had not iron nerve, as there were precipices at its side that would make one dizzy to gaze over, unless he had a cool head.

At the side of this cabin, under a tree, were five graves of more or less recent date, and at the head of each was a board containing the border name by which the man buried beneath had been known, and the date and reason for his sudden taking off.

A shed in front of the cabin was termed by courtesy a "piazza," and under this shelter was a rustic seat, on which the Misourian seated himself to gaze upon the five graves not ten feet away, which seemed to stand forth in bold relief as a warning to the latest inhabitant of Dead-Man's Den.

The view from the spur was particularly fine, for far up and down the valley the eye could roam, and beyond to the mountain range miles away.

The river and camps were in full view, with the Hash House rising below, and the neat home of Landlord Sampson and his daughter near by.

Half-a-mile away, on a ridge, was Hallelujah Roost, and the number of white headboards dotting the burying-ground showed that Last Chance had been

visited with an epidemic of bullet fever which had been fatal in most cases.

A couple of weeks after his coming to Last Chance, the man from Missouri had become thoroughly at home.

He had moved into his home on the mountain spur, and had made himself comfortable there.

He passed his time to suit himself, riding about the country by day, gambling by night, and almost invariably winning.

He was generous, always treated the crowd, and never cared to play with a man of limited means.

Whenever Deadly Hand played with him, he named high stakes and others drew out and left the two to gamble together, and the stranger seldom lost, though, strange to say, when the miner was in a game with others he was invariably the winner.

He always dressed with the greatest neatness, seeming to be as particular in having his costume look well in every-day life in a mining camp, as though he were in refined society.

He was courteous to all, yet reserved, and sought no friendships, and, to the delight of Deadly Hand, did not seem to seek the society of Ella Sampson, or to curry favor with her father.

Since her forcing him to obey her the night of the arrival of the man from Missouri in Last Chance, the miner had been more than ever devoted to the maiden, and she had, on the contrary, been more reserved toward him.

Still the desperado did not look upon the stranger, after the first few days of his stay in the camps, as a rival to be feared, until he came suddenly upon the two riding together along a mountain trail.

Deadly Hand did not know that the meeting had been accidental, and he scowled as they passed, but received a polite bow in response.

The stranger had met Ella but a few moments before, for he had seen her horse dashing along riderless and had skillfully caught him with his lariat, which he always had at his saddle horn.

He dreaded evil to the girl, but she called out to him a moment after, and he saw her standing over a deer which she had shot.

"My horse played me a shabby trick in running off, and I thank you for catching him.

"You throw a lasso like a Mexican," she said, as he rode up with her runaway horse, for she had seen him catch the animal.



"Please help me with my game."

He raised the deer in his strong arms, and threw it across the back of his horse, behind his saddle, and made it fast.

Then he aided her to mount, and they rode together toward Last Chance, to come suddenly upon Deadly Hand, who was also hunting among the hills, but on foot.

"Did you notice Demond's scowl as we passed?"

"Yes."

"That man means mischief, for he has been too pleasant since the night of his affair with you!"

"And with you, permit me to add, for I owe you my life."

"I am not sure of that, from what I saw you do, for, after all, you might have killed him, as you were watching him like a hawk, and looking for a chance to draw your weapon."

"You saw that, then?"

"Oh, yes!"

"I wished to catch him off his guard for a second."

"And had you done so, he would have not now been alive."

"Perhaps."

"I am sure of it, for your aim is quick, and sure as death."

"You have searching eyes, and took in the situation at a glance."

"Oh, I knew Demond, and was sure he meant to kill you, and he is a dead shot; and a plucky fellow, too."

"He showed nerve that night, certainly; but my idea is that had you not been present he would not have faced death as he did."

"Well, I am convinced that he means harm to you, so I advise you to watch him as though he were your deadliest foe."

"I am always on my guard, Miss Ella; but I thank you, as there is a very narrow partition between life and death."

"To those that lead the life that you do."

"You mean as a gambler, Miss Ella?"

"I mean as one whose life is always a deadly danger—a man upon whose head there is set a big price—in Missouri."

"Please explain, Miss Ella," and the man did not change one expression of his face at her words.

"I know you, Jesse James, as an outlaw—a hunted man!" was the startling reply of the girl.

## CHAPTER IX.

## ELLA'S SECRET.

The words of Ella Sampson were uttered in a low tone, but fell with startling distinctness upon the ears of the man she accused of being an outlaw—in truth, one whose name was spread through the Middle West, and who was none other than Jesse James.

He did not flinch under the accusation.

His face slightly changed color, and into his eyes came a sad expression, wont to dwell there at times when he was deeply moved by bitter memories.

"Yes, I am Jesse James," he said—"Jesse James, the outlaw, a hunted man, and there is a big price upon my head, and you are entitled to it."

"For shame to make that remark to me, for do I betray the men about me? How many are there in Last Chance who are not hunted men? How many are there who have not been driven by crimes, or the accusations of guilt, to flee from their homes, and, if the truth were known, many here have prices set upon their heads. Deadly Hand is wanted where he came from, I am sure.

"Not one man here to-day, save my father and several others I could name, answers to his own name.

"You dared come here and register in the tavern as J. James, of Missouri.

"It was a foolish act, for there are people who drift out here now and then, and they often have much to say of the deeds of Jesse James.

"Many of the reports may be true; but I know that many must be false."

The girl spoke rapidly and earnestly, and the man listened in silence.

Then he asked quietly:

"And what do you know of Jesse James?"

"We are from Missouri, and I was educated in St. Louis, so often heard of you, and what a fiend you were.

"Now and then I also read a word in your behalf; that cruel circumstances made you an outlaw.

"But when I came here to New Mexico to join my father, I first visited a relative in Kansas, and had to go from the railway station fifty miles by stage.

"The coach was held up on the way, and in broad daylight.

"The leader of the road-agents was Jesse James, and with him was his brother Frank.



"There were five men on the coach, and four women, including myself.

"One of the men was a consumptive—a poor man, going to his old home to die.

"Another of the men was a rich man of the town—a skinflint broker who robbed every one he could, having money to lend, and forcing the poor to pay his usurious demands.

"He had gone to the city to get money, and had it with him, being too mean to pay expressage on it.

"You, for you it was, Jesse James, wanted this man and his money.

"It seemed he was an old enemy of yours.

"The night before you had rifled his bank in the little town to which we were going, and took all the notes and mortgages he held of the poor people.

"These you burned in the attack and raid, thus paying the debts of many a poor man and woman.

"The money the man had with him on the coach you took, thirty-nine thousand dollars, I have heard.

"You put manacles upon him, and thus let him go, with the warning that if you heard of his grinding down and robbing poor people again, you would make him another visit.

"Not another on the coach was robbed, and we women were treated most courteously, while the consumptive was given, by both you and your brother, several hundred dollars with which to go to Denver and try to get well.

"Do you recall this scene, Jesse James, for it comes vividly upon me now, though then you wore a beard, and now you have only a mustache and goatee?"

"Do you recall no more of that scene, Miss Ella?"

"Yes, for one of the men was in irons, being taken back to prison, from where he had escaped.

"He was under a death sentence for murder, and condemned by circumstantial evidence alone.

"He had an officer of the law in charge of him.

"The prisoner you set free, gave him one of your extra horses to ride, and made the officer unlock the man's irons.

"As you rode away, the officer fired upon you, and, turning in your saddle, you shot him through the heart."

"And the prisoner?"

"It was said joined your band; but he was found later to have been innocent, so you saved from the hangman an innocent man."

"That man went with my party only until he could

find a place of safety, Miss Sampson. He afterward studied for the Methodist ministry, and is now in charge of a small parish in Colorado."

"Well, I am glad to hear that; but when I read the accounts of your holdup of our coach I could realize how stories against you were exaggerated, for they said that it was to free the prisoner—one of your gang—and to get Banker Skinner's money; also that you ruthlessly shot the officer for defending the women from insult, tortured the banker horribly until he gave up his money, and robbed every one of their last cent and even valueless jewelry."

"Yes, I have been lied against! But, then, I have given cause for much that is true to be told."

"Why did you come here?"

"You heard Deadly Hand ask if it had not become too hot for me where I came from?"

"Yes."

"Well, it had.

"I came out here to try a different life for a while, and see if the public would not forget Jesse and Frank James."

"That, at least, is to your credit."

"Thank you! but am I to understand that you do not wish the price on my head?"

"Mr. James, I am not an officer of the law, nor do I seek after blood money.

"If I did the latter, I could get rich right here in Last Chance, where heads, nearly all of them, have a value other than that which their owners set upon them!"

Jesse James laughed, and said:

"I thank you, Miss Sampson, and I feel that my secret is safe with you.

"There will be others of my band even here, but not to rob and raid the people, for they will try to hunt for gold in an honest way, and the chances are for them to thus get it. But here we are at your home, and I thank you for your frank talk with me."

He lifted her from the saddle, placed the deer upon the piazza, raised his hat and was mounting when she came close to his horse, and said:

"Beware of Deadly Hand!"

## CHAPTER X.

### ACCUSED.

Jesse James rode to his lone cabin, lost in deep thought.



There came before him visions of the wild life he had led as a hunted man.

How he had been at first outlawed by those who were his neighbors in his boyhood days, on account of his having gone with the South in its struggle.

From that time he drifted into lawless acts and became a marked man.

Owing to the great activity of the officers of the law against him, he had dispersed his band, and New Mexico had been the home of refuge he sought.

He had hoped to try another life there, and many of his comrades had pledged themselves to follow him there.

But the hand of fate was upon him, even there, and he was recognized as Jesse James, the outlaw, and by a girl.

Would not others also know him?

Would not his name, J. James, as written down upon the register of the Hash House, now be connected with that of Jesse James?

Once known, would not the price upon his head tempt those who were no better than he, perhaps with a price set upon them, to try and make him a prisoner, or, at least, kill him?

It would doubtless be the case; but he had come to stay, he thought, and there his comrades, drifting in singly, by twos or three, were to join him.

Then he could decide what was best to be done; but, meanwhile, he must take care of himself as best he could. Deadly Hand was to be watched and foiled.

He reached his cabin, put away his horse, and, sprucing up a little, went back to the hotel to supper.

Deadly Hand was there talking to Ella Sampson.

Jesse James raised his hat, and said, politely:

"Hello, Deadly Hand, did you get any game this afternoon in your hunt?"

"Yes, I allus gits game when I goes fer it; but, I seen you got some game, too," was the hasty answer.

"Miss Ella got the deer, not I."

"Yes, you got a deer, too, and brought it home."

Jesse James laughed and walked on into the supper-room, greatly to Ella's relief, for, in the humor in which Dick Demond then was, she dreaded more trouble between the two men.

After supper, Jesse James went for a walk, then dropped into the gambling saloon.

Drinking and gambling were in full blast, and at one table Deadly Hand was playing cards with a man who was a stranger to Jesse James.

He was a large fellow, of almost giant size, and had an evil face, which was all scarred over, as though he had been in some desperate knife encounters, or had been all shot up.

In Last Chance he was known as Satan Sam, and most of his time he spent out in the mountains hunting for gold, which, it was said, he had found in quantities in brooks and gulleys, for he would not dig for it.

When he came into Last Chance, he drank heavily, gambled for big money, and generally left a new grave up on Hallelujah Hill as a reminder that Satan Sam had been in the camps.

Deadly Dick played with him to a certain limit; but he was a man that he did not attempt to bully.

There was a large pile of dust upon the table and Satan Sam was winning when Jesse James entered.

Ella Sampson had gone to the saloon with her father, and stood watching the scene when Jesse James entered, and walked up to the table at which Deadly Hand and Satan Sam were playing.

At her entrance all loud and profane words ceased, and a change came over the scene, for all respected her.

A number nodded to Jesse James, and, as Satan Sam looked up and caught sight of him, he seemed startled, the cards dropped from his hands and he half rose.

But quickly he picked up his cards again, and said: "Well, Pard Deadly Hand, I quits at the end of this game."

And with so little interest did he seem to play, though winning, that Deadly Hand won the game.

Quickly rising, he left the saloon, after going to the bar and dashing off a big drink to steady his undoubtedly shaken nerves.

If Jesse James noticed the manner of Satan Sam, as Ella Sampson and several of the miners did, he did not show it, but said:

"Wish me to play with you, Deadly Hand?"

"Yas, if you wants to play big."

"Name your sum."

"Two hundred as a starter."

"All right," and the game was played and won by Deadly Hand.



Just then Satan Sam returned, and, walking up to the table, called out:

"Pards, I has been hunting fer dust a long time; but I thinks I is rich, fer that man has a big price on his head—he are the outlaw, Jesse James!"

In one instant, just how no one seemed to understand, Jesse James made a quick leap, seized the huge desperado in his grasp before he could even draw a weapon, and, with an exhibition of strength that was marvelous, raised him bodily in his arms and hurled him into a corner, where he fell with crashing force among chairs and tables.

A wild yell of delight broke from the crowd at this phenomenal show of strength from Jesse James, even Deadly Hand joining in the cheer.

Springing to where the man had fallen, and noticing that he lay stunned, Jesse James whipped out a revolver in each hand, and, facing the crowd, asked, in the calmest tones:

"Who else here wishes to accuse me of being an outlaw?"

No one had that wish, or, at least, dared to show it.

Even Deadly Hand was silent, and Jesse James turned to Landlord Sampson, and said:

"That man seems badly hurt, so please have him cared for at my expense.

"Miss Ella, kindly pardon my causing trouble here."

Then he turned to Deadly Hand, and continued:

"Shall we go on with the game?"

"I is willin'; but, my! what strength you has, for thar hain't ever been a man in these camps c'u'd do what you did with that two hundred and over human flesh and bones."

Jesse James bowed at the compliment, took up the cards and did not even glance at Satan Sam as he was borne away, still unconscious, or pretending to be.

That game and the next Jesse James won, and Deadly Hand said:

"I guess you holds the luck, pard, so I quits."

"All right," and half-an-hour later Jesse James left the saloon for his cabin, while Deadly Hand went to see Satan Sam at the hotel, where he lay bruised and battered, and with broken bones as well.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE MIDNIGHT DUEL.

When, over half-an-hour later, Jesse James left the gambling-saloon, he lighted a cigar and walked leisurely along toward his cabin.

As he left the saloon, he saw, for it was bright moonlight, a man's form dart around the corner of the building and disappear in the darkness beyond toward his cabin.

He went back into the timber a hundred yards and took a path—a rough one—that would bring him up in the rear of his cabin.

He crept as silently as an Indian to the shed in the rear of the cabin, where he kept his horse, and there waited to look about him.

He felt now that whoever the one he had seen might prove to be, he had not discerned his approach, for a thicket had hidden him.

But, whoever it was, doubtless he had but one object—to kill him.

That it was Satan Sam he could not believe, for that bully had been too badly hurt to be out, and the doctor of Last Chance had said that the desperado would be laid up for weeks. His arm was out of place, his collar bone, two of his ribs and a finger had been broken in his flight over chairs, benches and the floor, not to speak of the other bruises and a few cuts.

Deadly Hand had left the saloon all of half-an-hour before Jesse James had, and he was none too good to play assassin.

From the shed Jesse James crept to the door of the cabin.

No one was there. He glanced around the other corner.

There stood the man in the shadow, just beyond the corner, and with his rifle in hand.

He was waiting for Jesse James to return home, and he was as patient as an Indian.

There was no doubt as to who he was.

It was Deadly Hand, for that could be seen in the shadow.

Jesse James held his revolver in his hand.

He looked on, protecting himself by the near corner, and called out:

"Move and you are a dead man, Deadly Hand!"

Found in the act, the desperado was startled, and so badly so that he dropped the rifle he held.



With a bound Jesse James was upon him, and he called out:

"Now, hands up!"

"Pard, I came to see you, and this hain't no way ter treat a visitor."

"It is the way to treat one who comes as you do," and the weapons were taken from his belt.

The rifle was left lying where it had fallen, and the words came, sternly:

"Now, march for the tavern."

"Why fer?"

"Go, I say, if you want mercy shown you."

Deadly Hand obeyed, and in ten minutes the two entered the saloon.

A hush fell upon the crowd at the surprising sight of Deadly Hand marching in with Jesse James at his back.

"Pards, all, I found this man lying in wait around the corner of my cabin to kill me.

"He held his rifle, which fell from his hands as I caught him, and now lies on the ground by my cabin.

"I disarmed and brought him here, and did not kill him, as I should have done, for I wish to shoot no man in cold blood, and will give him a chance for his life.

"Who will be my second?"

A dozen answered. One of them—a stranger in Last Chance, who had not been a quarter-of-an-hour in the saloon and stood talking to Landlord Sampson—stepped forward, and said:

"I claim to be your second as an old friend of yours, Mr. James, and I was just going to look you up."

"Saint Peter's Ghost!" cried Jesse James. "I am glad to see you, pard, and accept your services; but my would-be assassin here wants a second, as I shall give him a chance for his life in a duel to be fought here, now, and with what weapons he may select."

Several also offered their services to serve Deadly Hand, but Landlord Sampson, with a view to having no trickery, as he glanced at those who wished to serve the desperado, said:

"I will serve you, Dick, for nothing but a square fight shall be held in this saloon."

The face of Deadly Hand had brightened when he heard that Jesse James was going to give him a chance for his life.

There were others he would rather have serve him than Landlord Sampson, but he dared not say so.

The stranger, whose hand Jesse James had warmly grasped, was a striking-looking person, and looked fully able to hold his own, even in Last Chance camps.

He was joined by Landlord Sampson, and it was quickly decided that the two men should stand across the room, armed with a revolver only, and, at the word, advance upon each other, firing as they did so.

Deadly Hand was not one, however, to allow his foe to escape, if the result went against him, and he called out:

"Pards, I has had a talk with Satan Sam, and he says he knows this man as Jesse James, whose deeds o' deviltry in the East is known in Last Chance.

"Ef he calls in my chips, jist see to it that he hangs right here, an' I'se goin' ter rest easy up yonder on Hallelujah Hill."

A yell greeted these words from Deadly Hand's backers, but Jesse James smiled and said:

"This gentleman knows me as I am, pards, and you who are crooked had better not get an army officer upon your trail."

"And I know Mr. James, for I met him East. The fact that his name is the same as that of the outlaw's does not make him a criminal," and Landlord Sampson's daughter appeared upon the scene.

Furious at the stand Ella made for the man, Deadly Hand called out:

"But Satan Sam says when he left the mines two years ago with thousands in gold dust, and got paper money for it in Denver, the train was robbed by the Jesse James gang, and he lost all he had, so had to come back to work up another fortune.

"He swa'rs this man are Jesse James, the man who robbed him, and I believes him."

"We hang assassins here in Last Chance, Deadly Dick, without trial, and so, if you say more, I shall stop this duel, in which Pard James gives you a chance for life, and see that you are strung up."

This threat of Landlord Sampson brought silence very quickly, and the two men were then placed for the duel.

It fell to the stranger, the second of Jesse James, to give the words, and he counted, distinctly:

"One! two! three! fire!"

There was a double report, but one that was half-a-second the quickest.

That shot, Jesse James, who had not taken his



cigar from between his lips, had fired, and Deadly Hand fell like a log.

His bullet had cut through the sombrero worn by Jesse James.

"He's not dead, for this knife saved him!" cried Landlord Sampson, taking a knife from Demond's waist pocket; but he added:

"The bullet entered his body all the same."

Jesse James did not answer the speaker, but said to his second:

"That was my second duel with that man; a double duel, in fact. But come with me to my cabin, Frank."

## CHAPTER XII.

### AN URGENT MESSENGER.

Jesse James left the saloon accompanied by the man who had been his second in the duel, and whom he called Frank.

If any of the crowd in the saloon, influenced by Deadly Hand's charge, backing up Satan Sam, that the newcomer to Last Chance was in reality the great outlaw leader, felt like action against him, not one made an effort to accuse him of it, or to stop him from going out.

"To think Jesse James wud be sich a durned fool as to come here under his own name, is too much fer even Satan Sam an' Deadly Hand to force down our throats," said a miner in a loud voice, and it seemed to express the opinion of all.

In the meantime Jesse James and his companion walked on toward the Dead Man's Den cabin, the home of the former, and in silence.

The moon lighted their way, and they both seemed deeply occupied with their own thoughts.

Arriving at the cabin, Jesse James picked up the rifle of Deadly Hand, and, unlocking his door, the two went inside.

Then, turning to his companion, Jesse James grasped his hand warmly, and said:

"Brother Frank, I am mighty glad you have come. Are you alone?"

"Here, yes; but two of the boys are camped back on the trail a dozen miles, waiting for us."

"Why didn't they come with you?"

"Because I expected you to go back with me."

"No; Last Chance is a good enough place for me, Frank. But you are the first of the band who has come to me."

"The others are waiting to hear from you."

"But I gave them full particulars, and——"

"True; but after you left three of the men were captured——"

"Ah! how? Surprised?"

"Yes, by a number of officers who went in on them at night and got them."

"And they are in prison?"

"Two are; the third, Con Rogers, was hanged. The mob tried him, Judge Lynch sat on the bench, and you know no time was lost. The crowd would have taken the others, only Judge Chace interfered and got them off to prison."

"Yes, to hang them later by process of law. Poor Con Rogers! I am sorry he met such a fate, and yet, as he linked his fate with mine, he had to expect to die with his boots on. But those two men shall not die on the gallows, Frank."

"I knew that you would say that, though I told the men not to head for New Mexico, but to remain in hiding until I came on with two comrades to see you."

"Who are the two men they captured?"

"Bob Young and Andy Samuels."

"By Heaven! but they shall be released, for they are two of the best in the band, and have saved my life a dozen times over. You show that you know me, Frank, when you refused to let the men come and leave those two splendid fellows in prison."

"I'll go back with you at once—to-night, if you are not too tired."

"I am anxious to return at once, and there is no time to lose, for it will be a quick trial, hasty sentence to the gallows, and a sudden taking off."

"You are right."

"But where is your horse?"

"At the tavern."

"And mine is here in my stable, for this is the ranch I bought, and it is said to be haunted by evil spirits, for all who have lived here have been hanged, and their graves are right at the door."

"A cheery place, I must say," was Frank James' comment, looking around him, and adding:

"You seem to be comfortable here."

"I am, and have seen no spirits, save the rum sold at the saloon."

"It is called Dead Man's Den, and that fellow, Deadly Hand, tried to add to the graveyard here by killing me to-night."



## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE SECRET CAMP.

"I am surprised that you did not send your bullet between his eyes, Jesse, and then there would have been no doubt as to killing him."

"I intended to; but when I took my stand, a lamp was just behind him, on a level with his head; so, as it blinded me, I had to aim for the body, for I had no time to change. His knife saved him."

"If it did, for the wound may have been fatal."

"Guess not, for he's a tough one; but some day I'll kill him. Now let me throw my traps together, while you go to the Hash House and get your horse, for you have to come by here."

"I'll go at once."

"Get some provisions from Landlord Sampson, for it will be some days before we strike the railroad, and ask how Deadly Hand is; also ask about the big brute, Satan Sam, whom I had to punish for speaking the truth, for the fellow accused me of being Jesse James," and both laughed.

"And, Frank, take this note to Landlord Sampson, who is a mighty square fellow, and to be trusted, while his daughter is true as steel and as plucky as any man I ever saw."

Sitting down to the rude table, Jesse James wrote:

MY DEAR SAMPSON:—The gentleman who was my second to-night brings me urgent news that takes me back to my home immediately.

Please take charge of my cabin, and expect me back within six weeks.

My farewell to Miss Ella. Sincerely, J. JAMES.  
If anything happens to me, the cabin is yours.

Within half-an-hour Frank James returned, and his brother was mounted and awaiting him.

"The landlord wishes luck to you, Jesse, and says that both Satan Sam and Deadly Hand will be out just about the time you get back, as both are badly hurt."

With this the two were mounted, and, well armed, started on their trail back to the scenes that know them so well, determined to rescue their two comrades from the gallows.

They held on until they reached the camp where Frank James had left his two companions, and, fearing that, after all, they might be pursued, Jesse James determined that nothing should interfere with his mission of rescue, kept steadily on the trail until after sunrise before camping.

It was just ten days after Jesse James and his brother left Last Chance that four men alighted from a train in a remote part of a State in the Middle West, and went to a livery stable and asked to hire horses for a ride into the country.

One of the men showed a detective's badge, and hinted to the livery-stable keeper that they were on a special mission.

"On the hunt for Jesse James or some of his men, I guess," suggested the livery man.

"That is it, only don't tell."

"I don't tell all I know; but I guess you'll find it hard to trace 'em now, as they do say Judge Chace has driven 'em away from here, for they caught three of the gang; the mob strung one up, and the two others are to be tried very soon over in the river town, where the judge lives, so they are as good as hanged."

"I should think so! but suppose we should not return this way, what price do you set on your horses?"

"An even hundred each, easily, and the saddles and bridles are worth fifty more."

"Well, here are three hundred dollars, and that is a liberal price, for I am a good judge of horseflesh."

"But where can we get a good dinner?"

"The best in the world over at the Tarry-Awhile, for I own that house."

After a dinner that belied the landlord's words, the four men mounted and started on their way.

They stopped for supper at a farmhouse, where they did get a good meal, and pushing on until midnight at a lively pace, came to a neck of wild, hilly, and heavily-timbered land that the river nearly made an island of.

It was in a desolate part of the country, far from habitation, and that any but wild animals would seek a refuge there, no one who knew the vicinity would believe.

But others than wild animals were there, and they were men.

Men, yet hunted as wild animals, and by many believed to be as savage, and as equally feared.

"I am glad you called the men to this camp, Frank, for it is within easy distance of our working point, and is a good retreat."

"Do you think many are here?"



"All of twenty, perhaps more, though some are undoubtedly in hiding, and others working their way out to New Mexico," was the answer.

It was a winding, rough ride to the end of the river, where, in the shelter of some heavily-timbered hills, was a camp.

There were several campfires, completely sheltered, and about them were men playing cards upon blankets spread upon the ground.

Others were grouped here and there, wrapped in their blankets and fast asleep, while up a little valley a number of horses were staked out.

A guard had been posted at the entrance to the neck of land, but a signal was given and the horsemen passed on. As they rode up to the camp every man was upon his feet, his weapons ready.

"Ho, men, glad to see you."

"The chief! the chief!"

"Captain Jesse!"

"Hurrah!"

"Come back to save the boys!"

"Just like you!"

"Now we can act!"

These, and more, were the cries of welcome Jesse James received, as he, his brother, and their two comrades dismounted at the camp fires.

Their horses were led off, a fire was brightened up, and a man began to get supper for the travelers, and all began to tell the situation as it stood then, and had been discussed by those who had acted as spies in the settlements.

"You see, Captain Jesse, the people think you and your men have been driven out of the country entirely, and that the hanging of Con Rogers and jailing of the other two boys have taught you a lesson."

"It did, to return, and I am here to rescue those two men."

"They are mighty closely guarded."

"That may be; but we must rescue by strategy if we cannot by force, boys, for these men must not hang. I was out in New Mexico, but when Frank came and told me the boys were in jail, I came back, and your being here proves that you all feel as I do.

"When they are free, we will go to New Mexico for a while, and if there is a chance for honest work there, well and good; but if not, why, we must live. Now, I'll think over a plan of rescue, and then we will act."

"Yes; there will be several more spies in to-mor-

row, and they may know of something to help us," said the man who had been in charge of the camp in the absence of Jesse and Frank James.

After some further conversation, all wrapped themselves in their blankets and sought rest, the men convinced that there would be stirring work ahead now that the chief had returned, for he was as true as steel to his men.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE PLOT.

The next morning spies brought in various reports of great interest to Jesse James.

To all that they had to say he listened in silence, Frank jotting down items here and there.

"Well, as I see the situation now, Burns and Lampton are in the jail, closely guarded by over a dozen men.

"The jail is as strong as a fort, and it would cost a dozen lives to storm it, and perhaps then our efforts would be a failure.

"Strategy must do what force cannot," said Jesse James.

"Have you thought of what could be done, Jesse?"

"Yes, Frank."

"Well?"

"They report Judge Chace is at home."

"Yes."

"The judge must be captured."

"Ah!"

"Yes, for Judge Chace is running this whole affair.

"He set the price on my head; he has been our most vindictive foe, and all yield to him."

"I guess you are right."

"I know that I am."

"How is it to be done to catch him?"

"To attack his home would be to bring the people of the town up there against us, and also alarm, perhaps harm his daughter, who once befriended me."

"I was thinking of that."

"Now, it would be well to send a man in laborer's garb to Judge Chace, stating that the circuit judge, Chambers, I believe it is, is at, say the Henty farm, on his way to visit relatives, and ask him to ride over to see him."

"I think I see your plan."

"Well, this man can tell him he is one of Henty's



workmen, and the judge will readily go, for he thinks nothing of a ride of a dozen miles.

"We must take him on the road."

"I see; and then?"

"He must meet our demands to save his life, that is all."

"And those demands?"

"That he write an order at once, for I shall have paper and pen there, to the jailer of the town to deliver the two prisoners to the two officers sent with the letter, and who are to be our men, those not known here, and with the badges of detectives on."

"Great!"

"The letter will state that the prisoners are to be taken to the jail at The Bend, up the river, for safe-keeping, as it is known that Jesse James' band intend to attempt a rescue, and all must be kept on duty, night and day, to resist it, as it is not certain just when the attack will be made."

"This strategy will win."

"It must and shall; and I know the men to go, while I have some of the judge's own stamped paper."

"Splendid! so go and pick your men."

"Suppose the judge refuses?"

"He must not; will not."

"If he does?"

"Then I shall hang him, as he would me," was the determined reply of Jesse James.

Two men were selected as those to play the part of detective officers, and they were cool, zealous fellows, just the ones to carry out a dangerous duty.

Then a man was selected for the one who was to play the part of Farmer Henty's laborer, to carry the message of the pretended judge to Judge Chace.

With these three men, and five more as aids to accompany them, Frank and Jesse James mounted their horses, and all rode by night to a hiding place not very far from the town, and upon the highway leading to the Henty farm.

The whole ride was made by night, all carrying cooked provisions along, as no fires must be built, and two horses were taken as extras for the prisoners, of whose rescue Jesse James was assured.

The retreat was reached before day, and the men went into a fireless camp.

Soon after dawn the letter supposed to be written by Judge Chambers was sent by the pretended farmhand to Judge Chace.

The others arranged to meet the man and the judge at a certain spot well suited for the capture.

For three hours they waited, and all had begun to fear that their messenger had failed to find the judge at home, or had been suspected and taken, when the lookout reported two horsemen coming.

They were the judge and the messenger.

The kidnapers were posted for action, and, just as the judge had passed the first man in ambush, Jesse James sent a lasso flying from his hand, the coil settled over the horse, and Judge Chace was a prisoner.

"Permit me to introduce myself, Judge Chace, for you do not know me by sight.

"I am Jesse James."

"My God!" broke from the lips of the man who had so often pronounced the death-doom of others.

But his face, though pale, did not show fear, and he said, sternly:

"Well, Jesse James, the outlaw, why this outrage upon me?"

"You set a price upon my life, dead or alive."

"Which your deeds have warranted."

"My evil deeds are open, and they have been exaggerated, while other guilty men have theirs hidden.

"But you have two of my men in your town jail, and they will be hanged if you try them."

"As they deserve."

"That is not the question; but it is your life against their freedom."

"Do you mean I am to let them go?"

"Either that or you will hang."

"Do you dare threaten me?"

"Yes; and unless you write an order for their release, you shall be hanged within the next half-hour.

"Come, men, let us retreat from the highway to that big tree I pointed out as we came here."

The party moved to a sheltered spot a couple of hundred yards away.

There the judge was ordered to dismount.

He obeyed.

Then he was read a letter to the jailer, which he was told to copy and sign upon a piece of writing paper bearing his own imprint.

"You have done your work well to get even my letter paper, but I refuse to sign it."

"You must."

"I will not."

"You know the alternative."

"I refuse."



"You shall hang."

"I can hang then."

There was no sign of fear, no weakening.

The man meant just what he said.

Jesse James saw this.

"Men, get that rope over the limb and put the noose around his neck."

It was done.

"Haul taut!"

This was also done.

"Now, Judge Chace, you have but five minutes to live unless you yield," said Jesse James, who began to fear that he was going to be thwarted, after all, by the great pluck of the man.

"I refuse, and may God have mercy on my soul!" he said, firmly, repeating the words he had often uttered to men whom he had doomed to the gallows.

"Judge Chace, you have five minutes to live," said Jesse James, and as he uttered the words there came an unlooked-for person upon the scene.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE PRICE OF LIFE.

The newcomer was a woman, or, rather, a young and beautiful girl.

It was Cherrie Chace, the only child of the judge, and the idol of his life.

She had decided, when her stepmother told her her father had gone, to ride to Henty farm, and return with him in the evening.

Coming far down the road, she had seen her father, in the midst of a group of men, turn from the highway into the timber.

She felt that something was wrong.

She rode rapidly until she came to the timber, and, utterly fearless, as she saw the party halted in the distance, she dismounted, threw the skirt of her riding-habit over her arm, and approached the spot unseen, to hear the curt words of Jesse James.

She had also been kidnaped by the band, and had been trusted to go and get the ransom demanded for her release, and she had done all she had pledged herself to do.

Knowing Jesse James now as she did, she appeared upon the scene to the utter amazement of all, and said in a voice that rang:

"Jesse James, I stake my honor, my life if need be,

for the ransom you demand to satiate your revenge against my father—will you accept the terms?"

Raising his hat from his head, Jesse James replied courteously, yet firmly:

"Miss Chase, this is no scene for you to look upon; but you are here, and perhaps can save your father's life.

"Your words show that you believe my demand is for gold.

"But you are mistaken. Your father holds two of my men prisoners, and a scratch of his pen will save them.

"I had left this part of the country, gone far away, and my men were going also; but one of my men was slain by a mob from your town, and two others taken.

"I came back to rescue them.

"Your father refuses, and he was brave enough to defy my threat to hang him.

"Now, how can you force him to yield, for, so help me Heaven, he shall hang if he does not free those men."

Cherrie Chace listened to every word.

That she understood the situation perfectly there was no doubt.

"Father, it is your life against the lives of those two outlaws, so yield."

"I know my duty, and I will never yield," was the stern reply.

Cherrie Chace bit her lips until they almost bled.

Then the lovely face brightened, and she said:

"What you cannot force my father to do, Jesse James, I will do in his place."

"And that is?"

"My father knows that I have written letters for him, and can imitate his writing and signature.

"I will write what you wish, and it will accomplish the same end."

"No, no, Cherrie, my dear child, you shall not do so!" cried the judge.

"Father, this is my affair now, and you are not to say a word."

"I accept your offer, Miss Chase."

"But the terms, sir?"

"My two men go as detective officers to bring the prisoners from the jail, and when they are safe, and I have yours and your father's pledge to say nothing of this until to-morrow."

"I shall give no such heinous pledge, sir, and——"



"Papa, I shall take the pledge for you."

"No, it shall not be given."

"Then you can go home and put the officers of the law upon the track of these men; but I will have them hold me as a hostage against your doing so," said the girl.

The judge fairly groaned, and was silent.

"Now, Jesse James, we must understand each other."

"Yes, miss."

"I write an order that you dictate."

"Yes."

"Two of your men, playing officers of the law, deliver it?"

"Yes."

"And bring the prisoners here to you?"

"That is it."

"Then my father and myself are free?"

"Upon his pledge and yours not to betray my presence here until to-morrow morning."

"I will give it."

"He must also."

"I will not."

"Then, by Heaven, Judge Chase, your daughter will be held a prisoner until you pay me her ransom and the price I placed upon your head, for you are a very rich man, as I know."

There was no doubting this threat, and, with the safety of his daughter at stake, the judge said, quickly:

"I will give the pledge."

"Then all is settled."

"Not yet, Jesse James!"

"Yes, Miss Chase."

"I have some terms to offer."

"Name them."

"That you pledge yourself that you and your men, on the coming of those two prisoners, at once leave this country, and for one year, at least, never appear within the bounds of this State."

"I will make the pledge, Miss Chase."

"And that, in leaving, you do not perpetrate another crime, or commit robbery in this part of the country."

"Unless we kill in self-defense, yes, I make the pledge."

"And I accept it."

"Now give me the paper you wish written."

He did so, and, using a fallen tree as a table, she

wrote it and signed it, and it would have taken an expert to discover that her father had not done it.

Taking it, the two men mounted their horses, and, with the two extra animals in the lead, started for the town, five miles away.

Jesse James got his cold provisions, and Cherrie Chase ate a good lunch, though her father was moody and silent.

In just two hours the men came back at a gallop.

And with them were the two prisoners, and both in irons.

But the supposed detectives had files, and they were soon set free.

"Captain Jesse, you have saved our necks!" said one of the men, with deep feeling, while the other dared not trust himself to speak.

"You would have done as much for me, boys," was the answer, and, turning to Judge Chase, he continued:

"I have a bad name, Judge Chase, and am a bad man, but I am human, and I never forget a friend or a foe.

"I have your pledge, and I know that you will keep it, for you showed yourself every inch a man, and if ever you do have to sentence me to the gallows, I will die as game as you would have done just now, but neither you, nor any one else, will ever see Jesse James hang. Miss Chase, I thank you, for you saved my men, and you have the satisfaction of having saved your father's life.

"Permit me to aid you to your saddle," and, as though she had been a child, he lifted her to her saddle, raised his hat politely, and, bowing to the judge, was turning away, when the latter called out:

"Why will such a man as you lead a lawless life?"

"Circumstances beyond my control drove me to it, and I drift with the tide," was the answer, in a bitter tone.

Flinging himself into his saddle, he signaled to his men, and they dashed away in the gathering gloom of twilight.

"Men, now to the secret camp, and then every one for himself, to go to New Mexico; but remember no lawless act must be done in this country, for that brave girl has my pledge."

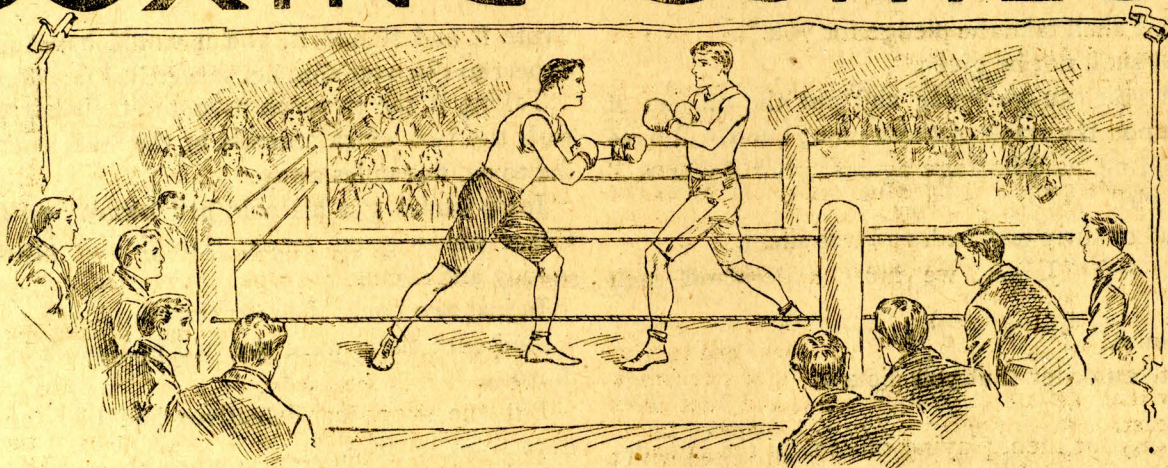
The following day the outlaw band had dispersed.

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 51, will contain "Jesse James' Kidnaping Plot; or, the Set-to in Tehama County." Before returning to New Mexico, the outlaw led his wild band to California. His whirlwind course through the State left a trail of devastation behind him.



# BOXING CONTEST



Only one more week, boys! The contest will have a hot finish, and you want to help in it. Remember that it's nearly always the last round that decides a fight. As long as you get your entries in before May 1, you have a chance. Don't miss it.

## Bob Orr.

(By L. Owens, Texas.)

"Bob Orr never won the Latin competition fair, I know. He must have cheated some way."

"Well, he is a coward if he did beat us, and I am going to get even."

So spoke three boys, Sam Nichols, Charles Hardy and Howard Wilson, all aged about seventeen as they made their way home from High School.

"I'll tell you, boys, how we may get even," said Sam. "You boys bring Bob to the gym to-morrow at recess, and I will get him to put on the gloves with me, and I will fix him."

"All right," answered Hardy and Wilson, and they parted for the night.

The following morning at recess a large crowd of students was assembled in the gymnasium. A pair of boxing gloves had been recently purchased, and most of the boys were interested in each others' prowess in the manly art.

Among them was Sam Nichols, a very good boxer, but somewhat of a bully.

As Hardy and Wilson made their appearance accompanied by Bob Orr, a rather tall, slim boy with a handsome, honest face, Sam said in a loud voice:

"You are afraid to put the gloves on with me, Orr."

"I am not afraid, but do not care to box," replied Bob.

"Oh, you are a coward and afraid!"

Bob's face flushed and he trembled for an instant, but regaining his composure replied:

"I will box you."

The gloves were immediately donned, a referee and timekeeper selected, and the boys stepped to the center of the floor.

"Time!" announced the referee, and both boys clashed. Sam immediately landed a hard swing on Bob's forehead. Bob retorted with a hard right to the body. After much sparring the round was over.

As the referee announced time for the second round

Sam rushed forward and landed a terrific blow on Bob's neck, almost putting him out, but he was quick to recover, and came at Sam with his guard well up, a determined look in his eyes.

Biff! He landed a hard one on Sam's nose. This was followed by a perfect rain of short-arm jabs, rib roasters, etc., and as Sam tried to lower his head to escape punishment he received a swinging uppercut which made his teeth rattle.

Suddenly Bob backed off a few paces, lowering his guard and exposing a vital spot.

Sam having recovered a little, seeing this opening tried to land a knockout, but our hero blocked it neatly, and before poor Sam could recover his equilibrium a gloved fist shot out, caught the bully square on the jaw, dropping him like a log.

He lay for some moments, then arose, tore the gloves from his hands and slunk from the sight of his conqueror and fellow students.

## The Tables Turned.

(By Chas. Hesselschmidt, Iowa.)

It was the 8th day of June, a hot and sultry day, as I was standing on the depot platform with several young fellows, when down the street came some cattle being driven along by several boys about nineteen years of age, one of which was known as Widow Brown's son. Now, Alfred Brown had lately come to town from Des Moines, and to make a living for himself and mother he went to driving cattle. He was the hardest-working lad in the city. So here we have him quietly doing his work trudging and tramping along behind the steers. But just as the steers were crossing the track two of them started on a run. Alfred seeing them at once took after them, and as he passed us a big negro stuck out his foot and tripped Alfred, who fell heavily to the brick platform.

Now this big negro was known to be the best boxer



in the city, and his name was Chas. Bell, and he went by the name of "Bell the Butter."

When Alfred fell to the platform he got up and with an exclamation of anger turned upon Bell. Bell quickly struck at Al, and then followed the greatest surprise that Bell ever went up against. When Bell struck at Alfred he made a rush, at the same time, but Al was on his guard and when Bell rushed at him he sidestepped in the most amazing way, and crash! sent his fist into Bell's face. Now, this was something most surprising to both us boys and Bell.

Before this Alfred looked to all of us as if he could not count three, but now we saw that Bell had met his match, for what followed completely changed our minds. The blow that Bell got made him curse and hiss like a savage beast. He straightened up and placed himself for a regular prize fight, and made away at Alfred with a terrible knockout crasher, but Alfred easily parried the blow, and after that he was worse than a raging cyclone.

He parried blow after blow, sidestepped, ducked, rushed and recoiled, smashed right and left-handers on the negro's face and body, which sometimes doubled him up. Half the time Bell could not tell which way to go. He tried in vain to land a blow on Alfred. One of the negro's friends stepped up to help him when Alfred sidestepped from one of Bell's rushes and landed him a crashing blow which I think is termed a knockout. The minute that Bell received it he fell like a log into the arms of his friend who had stepped up to help him.

The negro did not come to himself for five or ten minutes, but when he opened his eyes and saw Alfred standing there looking for more he said, with a shamefaced expression:

"I guess I am licked," and with that he offered his hand to Alfred, and now when he sees him he treats the widow's son with respect.

### Round One—Then a Race.

(By Jas. Ruzechka, Pa.)

It was last Fourth of July, just about half-past five. The sun was hot as could be when our gang of fun makers had got tired of hooting and were all lying around in the shade resting. Suddenly Andy Remor got up and said:

"What would be the matter with having a little fun with the gloves?"

I said it would be a nice thing to make a prize fight of it for the championship of the village. Andy had already put on a pair of the gloves and was tapping his friends lightly on the face, but never had any idea it would cause him to frighten them and that he would be unable to get a foe to scrap with.

I went to work, found a nice place for a ring, got a good clothesline, roped off the ring, marched Andy into it and I started to search in the crowd for a partner. It did not take long for me to find one. It was Bill Fry, about the same height as Andy, but slightly longer in reach. I brought him into the ring, put his gloves on and told them to get in their corners and listen to me.

I got out my watch and was ready for business.

"Time!" I called.

Both were up like a flash. Andy began the mill, landing a straight, stiff punch on Bill's left eye. Bill was

wild. Then he got on Andy somehow and was smashing right and left on Andy's ribs and face, making scars of all kinds. Andy soon changed the programme. They clinched, striking each other in the face till they looked like busted pumpkins.

Andy flew back from Bill. Then came a crash. Andy landed on Bill's face with hard punches till Bill's face could hardly be told from a red-painted carpet. Just then the fun began. Andy was all excited, threw off his gloves, leaped over the ropes and started out on a dead run for home.

Bill, in order to get his revenge, started down after Andy and ran him to his very steps.

We came following down after, and all the people in the village asking questions. News spread like wildfire, and in a few hours the whole village knew of the fight.

The next day Bill Fry was going about with a pair of blue eyes and six pieces of courtplaster on his face.

Andy did not look so bad on the face, but his sides were very sore for weeks.

### Morgan and the Champion.

(By John Hodgest, Md.)

About thirty years ago there lived in Kansas City a young man by the name of Frank Morgan. From his early boyhood Frank was very fond of boxing. He went to many fights, and finally he resolved to become a boxer.

Well trained, he challenged the champion Edward Kelly. His trainer, Charles Davis, warned him of Kelly's long reach. Frank practiced until the time came for him to enter the ring.

At first Kelly had the best of it. In the second round he struck Frank easily, then he made a vicious jab at Frank.

Frank ducked it cleverly. Then he delivered an uppercut. Kelly dropped like a log, then lost his temper and jumped up like a wild beast. He struck at Frank. Frank ducked the blow and then began to pound him. Kelly was wild. He made a desperate rush for Frank. Frank stepped around the ring quickly to one side as Kelly rushed. Then Frank's fists shot out like cannonballs. Frank delivered blow after blow, until the end of the second round, when he gave Kelly a blow over the heart which sent him reeling to his corner.

As the gong struck for the third round Frank came on with a smile on his face. At the beginning of the round Kelly gave Frank a slight blow on the arm. Frank rushed at Kelly and struck him a tremendous blow between the eyes.

Kelly fell unconscious. The referee counted out the seconds, while Frank was declared the victor and awarded the belt.

### Four in a Night.

(By Alonzo Wheat, W. Va.)

One cool night, when the boys would rather be in some warm room than running the streets, we happened to stop at the Kenmore Club rooms. They asked several of us to box, including myself. And as I am a pretty good athlete, it was some time before I had an opponent. At last a fellow near my age, but somewhat smaller, put on the gloves. It only took two rounds to put him out of the business.



A good strong punch on the head and one under the chin did the work.

Then it was a good while before another undertook to do me. But at last a fellow weighing about ten to fifteen pounds more than I did donned the gloves.

We sparred for a time, and were tapping lightly when the gong rang for the first round. The second was harder, but we were fresh when the gong sounded. At last the time came for the third round. He began smashing right and left. Being quick on my feet, I easily avoided them. When he had almost winded himself, I started hammer and tongs for a while, but it was not long before I found an opening, and I took good advantage of it.

I caught him in the wind and just kept following it up till he threw up his hands and staggered and was about to fall when they caught him. He came around all right and went home.

I boxed two others that same evening. One who never boxed except two or three times put the gloves on. He took a punch on the nose in the first round and he quit.

But the other fellow put up a good stiff fight. We fought three rounds, and it was hammer and tongs all the time, and was decided a draw.

I had won three battles and a draw that evening.

### Boxing on the Common.

(By Burrell McCrum, Ohio.)

As I was going down the street I saw a crowd on the common.

I went to see what it was and found two boys boxing. One of them prancing around rushed the other, and got a left swing that sent him staggering. The other followed it up with an uppercut which knocked him down. Then they went at it at close quarters until they were tired.

They rested a while and then commenced again, jumping around and making feints, occasionally getting in an uppercut or a swing. Then both rushed at each other and fought hard and fast, until we heard a thump and then one of them went down and out.

### A Speedy Victory.

(By John McIntosh, Tenn.)

Last winter at the school that I attended two of the older boys in my class got the teachers to let them have a boxing match.

The boys chose the boxing instructor for judge. The match was to come off the 20th of July.

The day came at last. There were three hundred and fifty-five people present to see the fight. It was to be a five-round fight. The prize was ten dollars in gold. The contestants were Frank Ellison and John Baker.

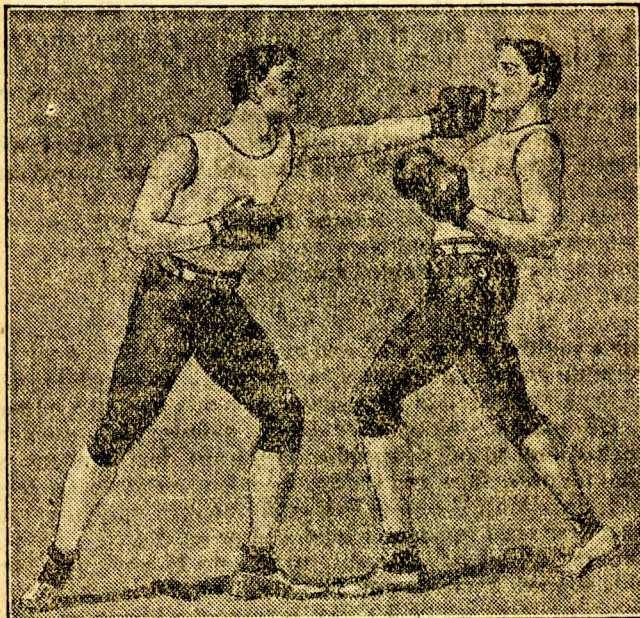
At last the day came. John Baker's weight was 121 1-2 pounds and Frank weighed 123 3-4 pounds. The rounds were to last two minutes each.

Frank knocked John down as fast as he could get up in the first round.

The tables then turned.

John landed one on Frank's jaw, and Frank was counted out. John received the ten-dollar gold piece as a prize.

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## A PROVIDENTIAL SPARK.

By WILLIAM MURRAY GRAYDON.

If there is any one incident in my past life that I particularly dislike to dwell upon, it is the night I spent in a lonely mountain cabin in Northwestern Arizona.

I had left the little mining settlement of San Rosa early that morning to visit a ranch belonging to a friend of mine that lay some ten or twelve miles to the westward.

I had never been there before, but from the directions given me, I felt sure I could find the place without difficulty.

I had to cross two or three mountain spurs, and pass through a couple of deep ravines to reach the high stretch of table land where the ranch was located.

I am fond of sport, and to this must be attributed the adventure which placed me in such peril. At sunrise I was four or five miles on my way, and while riding through a deep wooded hollow, I discovered bear tracks in a bit of soft ground, which had the appearance of being fresh.

Here was a temptation too great to be resisted, and, hoping to obtain a shot at Bruin, I followed the trail up the side of the ridge. The footprints, which were too small to be those of a grizzly, soon vanished, of course, but I rode on over the hilltop and down into the ravine beyond, eager to get a glimpse of the animal.

But Bruin failed to make his appearance, though I followed the hollow for several miles, and finally concluded to give up the search and strike for my destination.

But here I was confronted by a puzzling problem.

I had passed several intersecting ravines on my way, and now I was utterly at a loss which one to take.

I made a speedy choice, however, for there was no time to lose in hesitation, and rode briskly on for two or three hours.

But none of the landmarks which I had been warned to look for appeared, and I had to admit that I was lost.

It was now about four o'clock in the afternoon, and the setting sun showed that I had been traveling in the proper direction—in the general sense of the word—but whether the ranch was close or not, I had not the remotest idea.

Some distance ahead I could detect the sound of running water, so I concluded to slake my thirst, and then strike for the highest point of ground to be found, where I could obtain a view of the country.

In a moment I saw the water sparkling at the bottom of the ravine, and, as I rode down to the spot, a startling and unpleasant sight met my eyes.

Two men, an evil-faced Mexican, and an Apache Indian, were sitting by the side of a great rock. Their horses were tied to saplings a few feet away, and their arms, I noted with relief, were lying on the ground almost equally distant.

The surprise was mutual, for the mossy path had missed the sound of my horse's hoofs.

I recognized both instantly. The Mexican was Luiz Castro, a man who bore a bad name among the settlements, and his companion was Blueskin—so called from a couple of ugly scars on his cheek—and a very bad Indian indeed.

The Apache had been driven from his tribe for some misdemeanor, and for several years he and the Mexican had been inseparable companions—a very odd friendship, to say the least.

I concluded not to stop for a drink at that spring.

"Can you tell me the way to Block's Ranch?" I inquired, respectfully.

The Apache looked at me stolidly, but Castro quickly replied:

"Si, senor, straight ahead through yonder ravine. You can't miss it."

I thanked him, and nodding briefly, rode on. The ravine referred to was just ahead, and I had gone a mile or more when the suspicion suddenly occurred to me that Castro might have misdirected me for some evil purpose.

I carried quite a sum of money, which I did not desire to lose, and as rapidly as possible I rode on until a sudden gloom warned me that darkness was at hand. The ravine showed no signs of terminating, and my suspicion became a certainty.

The two scoundrels had guided me to this lonely spot with the intention, no doubt, of waylaying and shooting me.

They were quite capable of such a deed, I well knew.

I shivered at the thought, and, taking a hasty glance behind, put spurs to my mustang and trotted ahead as rapidly as the narrow, uncertain path would allow.

In five minutes the ravine widened, and I saw a small clearing just ahead, in the center of which was a rude log cabin. I rode eagerly to the door, and was disappointed to find it empty. Some lonely miner, perhaps, had once lived there until he either met a violent death or abandoned the place in search of a better claim.

It was now quite dusk and I realized the hopelessness of proceeding further that night.



The ravine narrowed again just ahead and the steep ridges on each side forbade any attempt at climbing.

My mind was made up in an instant. Here I must spend the night.

I hastily picketed my horse outside where he could find plenty of grass, and entered the cabin. I was agreeably surprised to find it in such good condition. The door was firm on its hinges and sockets on each side seemed to invite the heavy bar that was lying close by on the floor.

The window shutter could be secured in the same way.

A big fireplace was built in one end but the cabin contained no furniture whatever—unless a pile of dirty straw in one corner could be regarded as such.

I lost no time in securing the door and the window and then I felt comparatively safe, for I was well armed with a Winchester and a pair of revolvers.

I had crackers and jerked beef in my knapsack, and making a cheerful blaze in the fireplace I ate a hearty lunch. Then I lit my pipe and sat down with my back against the wall, where the heat could easily reach me.

I could hear my horse moving about outside, but no other sound reached me; and I began to be ashamed of my fears. I smoked and pondered for two or three hours, and I was just considering the advisability of bringing my horse inside the cabin for better security, when, without the least warning, a sharp report rang in my ears, and a bullet buried itself in the log within an inch of my face.

Startled as I was, I had sufficient presence of mind to throw myself flat on the floor, grasping my rifle in the fall.

I did not intend this for a ruse, but my unknown enemy evidently thought I had fallen from the effects of his bullet, for instantly I heard a thumping on the door, and a few words spoken in a low voice. Castro and the Apache were outside, I had no doubt.

The shot was fired through a chink in the logs, and, creeping over the floor, I put my Winchester to the orifice and let drive twice in succession, to let them know that I was not a dead man yet, and determined not to be one, if I could help it.

A hasty glance at the cabin walls showed me that wide cracks abounded everywhere, and, alarmed at the peril I was in, I tore off my coat and running swiftly to the fireplace, smothered the blaze and stamped out the embers.

I breathed easier when this was done, for, of course, my foes could not do any accurate shooting in the dark. Then I sat down in the center of the floor to await the next move. It was a trying situation, and the thought of spending the long hours of the night in baffling the attempts of the two would-be assassins was terrifying.

For a long time all was quiet, and then I heard them fumbling at the door and the window. This gave me little concern. I knew they could not force an entrance there.

Then another hour went by, and I was beginning to hope the miscreants had abandoned their scheme when I suddenly became aware that some one was on the roof. I understood instantly what this meant. My foes intended to come down the chimney. The sounds were so loud and so close that I believed one of them to be

already descending, and snatching up an armful of straw from the pallet, I dashed it in the fireplace and applied a match.

A few seconds later I realized what a dangerous trap I had blundered into, for as the blaze flooded the room with light, a rifle cracked, and I was knocked forcibly to the floor.

I believed for a moment that I was mortally wounded, but a little later I found that the bullet had struck my watch and glanced harmlessly off, after shattering the works.

I was not slow to comprehend the trick that had been played on me, and without any delay I crept to one corner of the room, which by this time was comparatively dark, for the straw had nearly burned itself out. One of the fellows had remained below ready to shoot while his confederate worked the cunningly-laid scheme from the roof.

For a time I was pretty sore from the shock, and then I began to fear that as a last resource they would come down the chimney in earnest.

I concluded to be on the safe side by preparing for such an emergency, and as the fire was now out, I gathered up what straw remained and piled it in the chimney place, ready to use if occasion required, though I determined to make sure that my enemy was actually on his way down before I flooded the cabin with light again.

I suppose two hours must have passed this time without the slightest move from the miscreants, but I remained watchful and alert, with my Winchester on my knee.

Then I was startled to see a tiny flame licking the base of the straw pile. Some sparks must have lingered in the embers of the previous fire, and I rose quickly to put out the blaze.

But before I could reach the spot the tiny flame had expanded with startling celerity, and the fireplace was a glowing furnace.

I looked hurriedly around for shelter, but before I could move a hoarse cry rang out from the chimney, and down tumbled Blueskin, the Apache, into the seething fire.

I dashed forward and dragged him out on the floor by one leg, before the flames could do him serious injury. He was stunned from the fall, though, and before he was able to offer any resistance, I had him securely bound, hand and foot, with a strong rope that I fortunately chanced to have in my pocket.

During this time Castro was probably on the roof, for no shots were fired through the logs; and, as the straw burned itself out, I felt that the siege had ended in my favor.

From Blueskin I had nothing to fear, and I knew that the cowardly Mexican would not attempt to carry out a plan at which his comrade had failed so disastrously.

The Indian spent the remainder of the night in groaning, and when the welcome daylight shone through the logs my friend Block arrived on the scene with several of his ranchmen, and my siege was over.

The ranch turned out to be only two miles away. My friend had been expecting me on the previous day, and the sound of shooting during the night led him to make a search in this direction.



Castro had decamped, taking my horse with him, but he was captured at a neighboring settlement a week later.

Blueskin recovered from his burns, and was handed over to the sheriff, who put him where he was not likely to injure any person for some time to come.

My escape that night was truly a Providential one. The crafty Apache had been stealing without a sound down the broad chimney when the little spark that was smoldering for hours burst into a blaze at just the right moment, for if Blueskin had gained the interior of the cabin, this story would probably have never been written.

## A Winning Uppercut.

(By Merle Bates, Pa.)

In our town there are two boys, Denny Wadsworth and Dennis Boyle. They are both good boxers, and they have fought each other before, but neither of them has been declared winner, so one night they decided to settle it. They met at Stickler's Flat at 6 p. m.

I was elected referee.

Dennis was the smaller of the two. He led off with a hard lug on the nose, which was answered by a knock on the chin. The fighting was pretty hot the first round, and when I called time at the beginning of the second round they went at it pretty swift.



At the end of the second round Denny was looking pretty groggy. They faced each other, and when they started again they sparred a little bit, and then Boyle got in an uppercut which knocked his opponent over. Denny got up, but he fought wildly, and Boyle soon got in a jab that settled him.

Denny had a bloody nose and a blackened eye. I declared Boyle winner.

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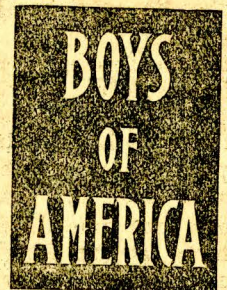
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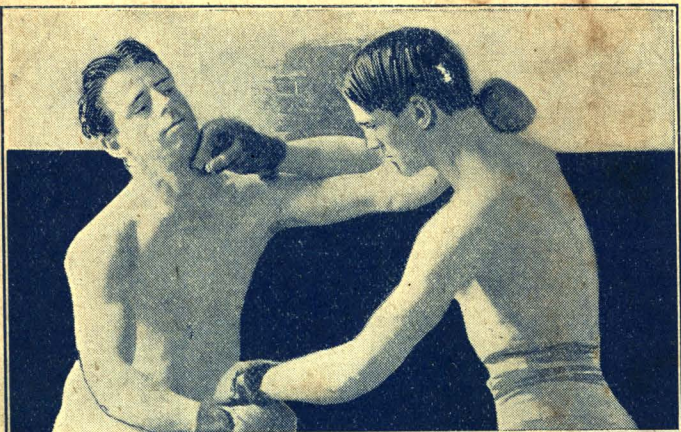
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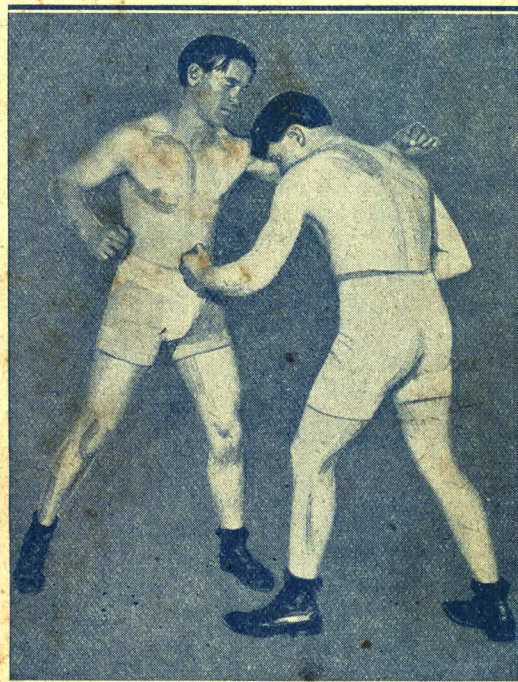
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